

Govenor Attends Graduation of First Female Graduation Of Meth Treatment Program

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Gov. Mitch Daniels



Left to Right: Commissioner Donahue, recent graduate from CLIFF, and Governor Daniels



ROCKVILLE - Mary Wine will be released from the Rockville Correctional Facility on Monday with

the tools she said she needs to overcome her methamphetamine addiction.

With Gov. Mitch Daniels looking on, the 36-year-old Granger woman and 48 other female inmates at Rockville graduated Wednesday from the Indiana Department of Correction's groundbreaking methamphetamine addiction treatment program, the Clean Lifestyle is Freedom Forever.

“I needed a substance abuse program before I went home. I had not really changed my way of thinking,” Wine, who is completing a shortened six-year sentence from Elkhart County for dealing meth, said in an interview after the graduation ceremony.

She blamed her drug use on low self-esteem. “I’ve learned a lot about myself - why I used drugs, why I dealt drugs.”

The ceremony at Indiana's largest women's prison, about 25 miles north of Terre Haute, was the first involving female graduates of the CLIFF program. The prison agency introduced the voluntary program a year ago for male inmates at the Miami Correctional Facility and has since started it at the Wabash Valley Correctional Facility. The first class at Rockville began eight months ago.

Daniels told the graduates he was as proud of them as the dozens of family and friends who attended the ceremony, supporters whom he said would help them stay clean once they left prison.

The governor also urged them to send notes and photographs to encourage future women in the program.

“We need 50, and many times 50, people like you contributing to our society,” Daniels said. “Realize that you are pioneers, you are leaders now.”

Robert Huckabee, an associate professor of criminology at Indiana State University, has been hired by the DOC to evaluate the post-release experiences of the graduates. He said it is believed to be the first prison-based meth addiction treatment program in the country.

State corrections programs in Illinois and Montana have announced plans to create special prisons that will hold and treat inmates convicted of meth-related crimes.

Methamphetamine is a highly addictive stimulant that can produce euphoric highs lasting for hours. Relapse rates among users who try to quit can be as high as 90 percent. Indiana prison officials have said as many as 4,000 state inmates are serving sentences for methamphetamine abuse or crimes connected to it.

“I am an addict. I will always be an addict,” graduate Susie Hawkins, 35, said during a reception following the graduation. She said she used meth for five years before being convicted of possession two years ago. “I now have the means to fight my addiction.”

The program focuses on easing the offenders' transitions to their home communities when they are released from prison. Graduates receive individual recovery plans with the names of service providers that can help them remain drug-free after prison. Those who complete the program can have up to six months taken off their sentences.

The program is among a host of initiatives that DOC Commissioner J. David Donahue has introduced in the past 16 months help inmates stay out of trouble. The agency says nearly 40 percent of inmates return to state custody with three years of their release.

Wine, Hawkins and the other graduates each wore white T-shirts with a large purple-and-yellow butterfly and the CLIFF logo on the back as they walked to the front of a recreation room to receive their certificates and shake hands with Daniels, Donahue and Rockville Superintendent Walter Martin.

The relatives at the graduation included sisters Trish Cox of Florence, Ky., and Cindy Rehfues of Austin, Texas. They made their first trip to Rockville to see the graduation of a third sister, Sue Rehfues, 43, of Cincinnati, who is doing time for possession of meth.

“We hope she's going to take away the conviction and stay on the road to recovery,” Cox said.

About The Department of Correction

The Department employs over 8,000 employees and houses 24,000 adult and juveniles in 32 facilities, ranging from minimum to maximum custody, prison camps, juvenile facilities and work release centers. The Department’s home page on the Internet can be found at: <http://www.in.gov/indcorrection>. The Department’s Re-entry Site can be found: <http://www.reentry.in.gov>.